

Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Robert TAYLOR : *Workers and the New Depression*. London, Macmillan Press, 1981, 212 pp., ISBN 0-333-33411-6

Alexander J. Matejko

Volume 39, Number 3, 1984

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050067ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/050067ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (print)

1703-8138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Matejko, A. J. (1984). Review of [Robert TAYLOR : *Workers and the New Depression*. London, Macmillan Press, 1981, 212 pp., ISBN 0-333-33411-6]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 39(3), 636–636.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/050067ar>

Tous droits réservés © Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval, 1984

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

Érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

Workers and the New Depression, by Robert Taylor, London, Macmillan Press, 1981, pp. X + 212, ISBN 0 333 33411 6

With the heavy unemployment in the U.K. becoming a permanent phenomenon there is a justified concern how much blue collar workers suffer and where the situation leads in the long run. The author blames the lack of an adequate manpower planning, bad industrial training, excessive job restrictions and controls, as well as inability of socialists actually to represent attitudes of mind among manual workers. «Labour has proved more accomodating to the conflicting external pressures that hamper progress on the one hand, and yet more dogmatic about such nonsenses as state ownership of industry (all power to the bureaucrats) on the other» (p. VIII).

With the unemployment becoming part of daily life and the lobby of protest against this fact failing to realize, there is a danger the situation to be a permanent feature. «The unemployed in Britain do not constitute a homogeneous, closely-knit group of people, capable of either organizing themselves or being mobilized to protest against this condition (...). The main victims of the slump are male manual workers without any skill or qualifications» (pp. 10, 11). In the wage jungle dictated by decentralized multi-plant bargaining, the stronger are winners and the weaker are losers. There is no hope that the better-off will make sacrifices that would benefit the weaker categories of workers. In addition, in productivity the U.K. remains much behind other countries, much suggested by the restrictive labour practices commonly appearing in various occupations. «The burdens of history — claims the author — of our voluntarist traditions and the power of the work group, remain formidable obstacles and the present slump looks unlikely to change these fundamental attitudes of mind» (p. 98).

There is no state intervention to assist these workers who can not help themselves by gaining an adequate retraining. The inequalities at work remain persistent and there is much indifference in this respect. In the

unequal and divided British society strikes in reality are not an effective challenge. They «mirror a self-regarding sectionalism, with narrow aims, offering no direct challenge to the existing economic and social system» (p. 169).

The realistic perspective taken by the author helps to understand the sources of unemployment and its consequences for those people who do not have any leverage to bargain collectively for their wellbeing. There are several simplifications and misunderstandings about the fate of British unemployed which the author dismisses quite effectively. His book is a very reliable insight dictated not by specific vested interests or a doctrinaire approach but by the genuine concern for those who are neglected.

Alexander J. MATEJKO

University of Alberta

Organizations: A quantum View, by Danny Miller et Peter H. Friesen (avec la collaboration d'Henry Mintzberg), Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1984, 320 pp., ISBN 0-13-641985-2

La recherche traditionnelle dans le domaine des organisations a donné lieu à de nombreux débats dans la littérature. Les bureaucraties sont-elles centralisées? La proportion de personnel administratif augmente-t-elle avec la taille de l'organisation? Est-ce la taille ou le système technique qui est le facteur déterminant de la structure? Les résultats de ces recherches sont souvent contradictoires et le débat semble sans fin.

Pour Miller et Friesen, ces résultats décevants sont attribuables à la manière avec laquelle ces questions sont abordées. La thèse de ces auteurs est à l'effet que les méthodes traditionnellement favorisées dans l'étude des organisations encouragent l'analyse en l'absence de synthèse. Aussi, ils se font les avocats d'une approche qui favorise la synthèse en développant ou isolant des composants qui prennent la forme d'archétypes ou de configurations. Celles-ci peuvent être définies